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ABSTRACT

This publication reports on the progress that the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada has made to respond to the higher education needs of the northern region of Canada. In particular this report evaluates the progress made after 3 years on a series of formal recommendations proposed in 1988. The paper lists each of the recommendations and offers description and evaluation of the steps that have been taken to implement them. Some of the recommendations suggest that the University: (1) develop a policy statement on these issues; (2) establish an executive level coordinator for responding to needs of the North; (3) support official relations between northern scientists and researchers on campus; (4) be more sensitive to the aspirations of northern community members; (5) foster international cooperation; (6) establish formal relations with various colleges and programs in the North; and (7) offer distance, part-time, and other options to northern students to facilitate their participation in higher education. The evaluation of the University's response to these recommendations found that the University does not appear to be taking a proactive stance toward extension of services to the North. However, it does seem to have reacted in a positive manner when possible to requests for services for Northern communities. (JB)

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University of Alberta

# The Senate

## Progress Review
## University and the North

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April 1993



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**REPORT OF PROGRESS REVIEW COMMITTEE OF TASK FORCE ON THE UNIVERSITY AND THE NORTH**

**PREAMBLE**

In April 1992, the Senate established a Progress Review Committee in response to Recommendation 19 of the Task Force Report on the University and the North, which was presented in September 1988. Appointed to serve on the committee were Mrs. Christina Andrews (Chair), Judge Peter Caffaro, who had chaired the Task Force, and Mr. Eric McCuaig. Copies of the Task Force Report are available from the Senate Office.

Prior to the setting up of the Progress Review, discussion on issues raised in the original Report was initiated by a memo from Mr. Robert Gibson, Northern Student Services Officer. The committee then contacted departments and individuals on campus most closely connected with the recommendations. In this Report, some of the previous recommendations have been grouped together, because the findings may apply to more than one.

Since the presentation of the Report, some changes have occurred on campus in areas not anticipated by the members of the original Task Force, and that information is included in this report. In other instances change does not appear to have taken place, and where the Progress Review Committee is disappointed in this, that too is mentioned.

In summary, the University does not appear to be taking a proactive stance toward extension of services to the North. However, it seems to have reacted in a positive manner, whenever possible, to requests for services from Northern communities. We foresee some possibilities of extension of services to the North through distance learning arising from the Report to the Vice-President (Academic) from the Task Force on Teaching and Learning.

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NOTE:

**The Progress Review Committee found when reviewing the Task Force Report that responses to some of the recommendations could be grouped together. The recommendations in Bold are from the original Task Force Report. Commentary and information gathered by the committee follow; and the Progress Review Committees comments are in bold italics at the end of each section.**

Recommendation 1

**It is recommended that the University of Alberta develop a policy statement with regard to the University's responsibilities in the North. The University's goals and objectives for undergraduate and graduate education, research and community service should be clearly defined.**

Recommendation 2

**It is recommended that the University of Alberta establish an Office of Northern Coordination at a senior administrative level. This Office should encourage and facilitate the activities of all parts of the University in fulfilling their responsibilities to the North. Its mandate should include communication to and from and cooperation with all northern communities, educational institutions and students.**

Recommendation 11

**It is recommended that the University of Alberta develop an official connection between University researchers and those in the Northwest Territories and Northern Alberta, in order to improve co-ordination of research activities, foster co-operative research and encourage northern scientists to remain actively involved in research.**

Recommendation 12

**It is recommended that University of Alberta researchers become much more sensitive to the aspirations of northern community members. In conducting research in the North, efforts should be made to develop strategies for effective communication with northern residents and for their direct involvement.**

Recommendation 18

**It is recommended that the University of Alberta foster international co-operation among northern-oriented research groups.**

There is no specific mention of the University's responsibilities towards the North in the University's Mission Statement, which was formulated after the presentation of the Task Force Report in 1988. The Mission Statement places emphasis on the University in a provincial rather than a regional role.

The committee did, however, accept the re-structuring of the Boreal Institute, resulting in the establishment of the Canadian Circumpolar Institute in July 1990 as recognition in part by the University of the special role it plays with respect to the North. In the 1990-1991 Annual Report of the Canadian Circumpolar Institute, Dr. Clifford Hickey, Director, said:

> A long historical connection with the North established the University of Alberta as the leading academic institution for northern research in Canada. In an era of tight budgets but rising expectations, it was necessary to make substantial changes to the nature of its institutionalized commitment but in so doing, it has reaffirmed and strengthened its role in fostering northern scholarship and in addressing the needs of its constituency.

According to its mandate statement,

> The Canadian Circumpolar Institute is the centre for northern research at the University of Alberta serving Northerners, students, academics, government, industry, and the general public. The Institute's mandate is:
>
> - to promote and support research on the circumpolar north, especially that involving inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary programs;
> - to promote and support the Canadian Circumpolar Library as a distinctive northern research collection of international importance;
> - to foster communication among northern-oriented researchers;
> - to encourage the involvement of northerners from all circumpolar nations in the activities of the Institute; and,
> - to disseminate information about the circumpolar north.

The CCI Advisory Board includes members of the University of Alberta Northern Research Committee and reports to the Office of the Vice-President (Research). The Director of the CCI is also the Northern Research Coordinator for the Vice-President (Research).

The Director notes that the more satisfying arrangements appear to be the informal networking provisions that are put in place on a project by project basis, rather than more formal agreements. Communities are made aware of the research expertise of the University so that they may set their own research priorities and invite the University to participate in them. The Institute works through the local aboriginal bureaucracies and plans are developed in full collaboration with the communities.

> ***The Progress Review Committee feels that, for the most part, the intent of these recommendations has been addressed.***

<u>Recommendation 3</u>

**It is recommended that the University of Alberta establish an Affiliation Agreement with Arctic College and the Science Institute of the Northwest Territories, and work towards increasing opportunities for interchange between faculty and students.**

Recommendation 17

**It is recommended that the University of Alberta offer its support to the Arctic College in areas of university expertise, eg**

- **curriculum development**
- **specialized training and professional development for teachers and support staff**
- **assistance in research on issues with a focus on northern problems**

The President of Arctic College said that his faculty would certainly feel comfortable asking for assistance from the University of Alberta, and the University has had fruitful discussions with the College.

Although the expectation was that Arctic College would begin work on a proposal to present to the Vice-President (Academic) regarding a formal transfer agreement with the University of Alberta, to date no such request has been received from the College. Associate Vice-President Lynn Penrod noted several collaborative ventures with Arctic College including the offering by University of Alberta-approved instructors of four U of A courses: Native Studies 311 (Native Issues and Insights II), Native Studies 320 (Aboriginal Self-Government), Native Studies 340 (Native Law) and Anthropology 346 (Peoples and Cultures of the Circumpolar Region) or Anthropology 327 (Indigenous and Cultural Minorities in the Modern World). Students were enrolled as unclassified students. A meeting between the two institutions in August 1990 discussed several issues regarding delivery and individual credit transfer arrangements; sharing of course outlines, resource materials and faculty; credit arrangements for other Native Studies courses; possible faculty exchanges; and future potential for cooperative initiatives and further joint ventures.

The Science Institute of the Northwest Territories has its major links to the University of Alberta through its relationship with the Canadian Circumpolar Institute. Links are strong and collegial, but as the Institute does not offer courses, no affiliation agreement would be appropriate.

> ***The Progress Review Committee finds that the University has responded in collaborative ventures, when requested, and appears open to requests from Arctic College.***

Recommendation 4

**It is recommended that the University of Alberta expand its involvement in programs such as the Sunrise project which enable commencement of university studies close to one's home community.**

Information from Mr. Lloyd Carswell, Director, Special Sessions, shows that the Sunrise Project, originally established at Slave Lake, was expanded to Grouard in 1991-1992, in cooperation with the Alberta Vocational Centre there. January 1993 is the tenth anniversary of the Sunrise Project.

Currently there are 71 full-time and 23 part-time students (native and non-native) participating, an increase since 1988 when the corresponding figures were 28 and 8. Since 1983 26 students have completed undergraduate degrees and some have progressed to advanced degrees. Most students transfer to the University of Alberta, in the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education programs. More women than men attend the Project, and more of the students are presenting higher academic qualifications upon admission. More married students are attending, especially on a part-time basis.

> ***The Progress Review Committee notes that the University of Alberta continues to support programs which enable students to begin their programs without moving to Edmonton.***

Recommendation 5

**It is recommended that the University of Alberta and community colleges continue to work together to improve and extend University transfer agreements.**

Recently the Boards of the University of Alberta and Grande Prairie Regional College presented a proposal to the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development requesting funding for the delivery of a complete Bachelor of Education program in Grande Prairie. All courses would be offered in Grande Prairie, by faculty from either the Community College or the University, and the degree granted would be a University of Alberta degree. If this proposal is funded, it would work on a collaborative basis similar to the program in Red Deer, where students can already study for a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree and complete all requirements in that location.

Transfer students from postsecondary institutions in Alberta to the University have increased in number since 1988 from 1,708 to 2,114 in 1992.

> ***The Progress Review Committee concludes that the University of Alberta is open and receptive to requests for expansion of the transfer system, while being cognizant of its budgetary concerns.***

Recommendation 6

**It is recommended that the University of Alberta be more responsive to the need expressed by northern residents for graduate level programs.**

Recommendation 7

**It is recommended that the University of Alberta offer as much flexibility as possible, while maintaining high standards, with regard to residency requirements and opportunities for part-time study, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.**

Recommendation 8

**It is recommended that the University of Alberta offer off-campus courses on a program basis as much as possible. Rather than offering ad hoc courses, course offerings should be based on client need and a rational plan developed in consultation with potential students and community groups.**

Recommendation 9

**It is recommended that the University of Alberta accept that non-traditional innovative modes of program delivery are not only possible but necessary if needs of northern people are to be met; and that the University encourage the development of flexible and imaginative approaches to educational delivery; (eg, seminar-supported teleconferencing, concentrated class sessions, short term field courses, summer exchange programs).**

Since the presentation of the Report, three faculties have become involved in the provision of off-campus graduate programs: the Faculty of Business in Fort McMurray, where MBA courses are offered, through an agreement with Syncrude; the Faculty of Engineering which also offers graduate courses in Fort McMurray; and the Faculty of Education which continues to provide courses leading to a Master of Education degree in numerous places, including Yellowknife. In Fall 1993 a graduate level diploma program for school librarians will be initiated by the Department of Elementary Education in Grande Prairie, and there is a possibility of extending it to Fort McMurray the following year. Discussions are taking place with a view to introducing graduate level programs in Nursing in Grande Prairie.

In 1991 there was a fundamental change to the format of graduate programs. Particularly - but not solely - in professional programs, there is now often a course-based as well as a thesis-based route. A mandatory period of residence is optional in many cases. This means, essentially, that a student is able to fulfill a department's requirements without coming to the campus, as residency can be achieved through taking University of Alberta courses, even if not in Edmonton. Completion of the coursework is followed by a capping exercise, intended to demonstrate the candidate's ability to synthesize the varied information accumulated through the program.

These changes reflect the position that for many professional people, a graduate degree is for professional advancement, and the research component is less central.

The Director of Special Sessions advises that in general his unit responds, where possible, to suggestions made in the community, and that he feels there is more openness from the faculty. Courses offered at Blue Quills, Sunrise and Yellowhead Tribal Council are all program-based. He does not normally instigate programs, because of financial constraints.

The Instructional Technology Centre in the Faculty of Education has planned and presented an Instructional Fair on campus for the past four years. This year 24 projects are being showcased. The Centre disseminates information about professional development audioteleconferences from the Canadian Association for Distance Education, and serves as a support centre for distance education programs on campus.

The Vice-President (Academic) established a Task Force on Teaching and Learning. Among suggestions he received from the Task Force were two relevant to the above recommendations: one concerning the provision of additional incentives for the development and use of alternative delivery systems which allow students to be active participants in teaching and learning practices on campus and off campus; and one relating to the provision of additional support for the use of integrated interactive telecommunications technologies (teleconferencing, videoconferencing, computer-mediated communication). If implemented, these recommendations could enable the University to respond effectively to the needs of many off campus students for undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

> *The Progress Review Committee concludes that the University is committed to encouraging non-traditional innovative modes of program delivery, and notes the positive results for students everywhere, including the North. Although it is not evident that there are a great number of specific requests received by the University for off-campus programming, new developments in distance education may bring more opportunities especially now that a change in policy by Alberta Advanced Education allows the University to charge fees on a cost-recovery basis at the graduate level.*

Recommendation 10

**It is recommended that the University of Alberta explore ways of using more northern residents in the delivery of off-campus courses in the North, as instructors, facilitators, tutors etc.**

As noted under Recommendation #16, the Memorandum of Agreement between the Faculty of Education and the Northlands School Division makes special note of the use of local instructors.

Recommendation 13

**It is recommended that the University of Alberta, through Native Student Services, continue to provide the personal and educational support to Native students studying on this campus, recognizing that it is a critical factor for successful completion of studies.**

Ms. June Kaida, Acting Director of Native Student Services (NSS), responded to the Progress Review Committee by noting the following actions taken since the presentation of the Task Force Report:

- three Aboriginal Student Advisors were hired to provide needed support services: one to advise and advocate for prospective and faculty students (approximately 400 students); one to advise and advocate for prospective students and coordinate the Transition Year Program (77 students this year); and one to assist with academic advising in both areas and coordinate community liaison services.

- the services of a chartered psychologist were acquired to provide personal counselling on campus, and establish a referral system to include off campus Native counselling services and elders.

NSS provides academic, personal and financial counselling. It plans culturally relevant events with presentations by Elders and other Native groups. Liaison on behalf of students is undertaken with faculties, advisors, the Office of the Registrar, Housing and Food Services, the Office of the Comptroller and other services units. Contact is maintained with off-campus agencies such as Indian & Northern Affairs, Bands, Students Finance Board, employment agencies, and Career and Placement Services; and with outreach program advisors at Blue Quills, Maskwachees, Yellowhead Tribal Council, Concordia College, and high schools with large Aboriginal student enrollment. Orientation and information services are available, as well as on-going group support to the Aboriginal Students Council. NSS also coordinates and administers the Transition Year Program for Aboriginal students who need an integrated approach to academic and personal support systems during their first year of studies.

An additional program instituted in 1990 was the establishment of the position of Northern Student Services Officer (NSSO). The NSSO's primary responsibility was to encourage students to stay in school and act as a contact person for those NWT students, both Native and non-Native, attending post-secondary educational institutions within the greater Edmonton area. The NSSO acts as a link between the students, educational institutions, governments,landlords, employers and employment agencies, as well as other interested individuals within the local community. The main objective was to encourage, in a very personal way, the retention of northern students within the educational system. The diverse partnership supporting the position was unique. The Northern Youth Education Initiative Programs demonstrates one solution through resource load-sharing by a partnership.

Support was originally received from Bellanca Developments Ltd., the Government of the Northwest Territories, the University of Alberta (NSS) and Health and Welfare Canada. However, the position is not funded permanently. Although funding is in place to cover salary costs for five years, there has been no external provision for operating costs. Some funds from Native Student Services, and in 1993 the Northern Students Association (Edmonton), have been used to cover these, as Health and Welfare Canada support was redirected by the department to provincial areas of responsibility. Therefore, difficulties are anticipated during the following years of operation.

> *The Progress Review Committee regrets the fact that the Northern Student Services Officer position is not permanently funded, and as the program appears to be so successful, it urges the University to consider the maintenance of the position.*

Recommendation 14

**It is recommended that the Faculty of Education, Boreal Institute, and School of Native Studies, working closely with northerners, play a leading role in the research and development of curriculum materials in Native languages for university and school courses.**

Alberta Education is primarily responsible for the development of curriculum materials, and the Director of the School of Native Studies advised that a faculty member had assisted the Department with curriculum materials in Cree for use in high schools.

Professor Marilyn Assheton-Smith, Coordinator, Intercultural Undergraduate program in the Faculty of Education, noted that little had been done on this recommendation, although the Department of Elementary Education had offered a course on teaching indigenous languages in a summer session at the Alberta Vocational Centre, Grouard. That course emphasized the development of curriculum materials. Professor Assheton-Smith felt there was a need to develop curriculum as part of the process of teaching and working with communities - that is, to treat curriculum as more process than product, and for the University to work with the schools, not provide curriculum service to them.

Recommendation 15

**It is recommended that the University of Alberta be pro-active in encouraging Native students to prepare for and enter professional faculties.**

In September 1990, General Faculties Council adopted an Aboriginal Student Policy, which outlines a framework within which the University creates an environment to encourage full access and participation of Aboriginal students in all faculties. The objective is to meet a 5% Aboriginal quota in the total university enrollment. Many faculties have set aside spaces specifically for Aboriginal applicants who meet the minimum faculty admission requirements. Some faculties have in place their own support programs and services,

designed to increase the enrollment of Aboriginal students. Faculties currently setting aside places for Aboriginal students are Dental Hygiene, Dentistry, Education, Law, Medical Laboratory Science, Medicine, Pharmacy and Rehabilitation Medicine.

The Transition Year Program (TYP) administers separate streams of the Transition Year Program, designed to give Aboriginal students a chance to excel in their first year courses within their chosen faculty. Last year seventy per cent of all new faculty admissions of Aboriginal students were from students who had completed the TYP. It has a present enrollment of 77. Unfortunately no base funding is in place to support this initiative. In addition, the Community Liaison Position does not yet receive base funding from the University of Alberta, although its work through a Student Ambassador Program in accelerating the recruitment rate of prospective Aboriginal students to all faculties is crucial.

> *In the view of the committee, the University is to be complimented on these initiatives, and the support shown to the programs, since many native students come from Northern Alberta; but the committee urges the University to consider permanent funding for this position.*

Recommendation 16

**It is recommended that, in order to better prepare teachers to teach in cross-cultural settings, the Faculty of Education examine ways to strengthen the Undergraduate Program in Intercultural Education. The Faculty should work closely with educational groups in northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories, and provide for as much supervised practica experience as is possible.**

The Faculty of Education has recently signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Northlands School Division for a Native Teacher education program. The model is community-based, school-based and at times a co-operative work/study program. Students will complete university course-work and contribute to the work of the school as interns throughout the program. Courses may be offered by institutions other than the University of Alberta and instructors may be drawn from various settings. The degree earned will be a University of Alberta degree. This model could provide a breakthrough in practicum opportunities which involve students from the University not only in the classroom but in the full educational context of the student, ie, the school, the commuity and in the Native-non-Native relationships which function to facilitate or hinder learning.

Practicum placements in northern areas have increased substantially since 1988, and more students are able to experience teaching in a non-urban professional setting. The Practicum Office in the Faculty has developed field placements for students in non-urban regions, and built a model of practicum work to involve a cohort of students going out to a school and developing a particular type of team relationship within schools, implying the possibility of of long-term involvement with schools.

*The Progress Review Committee sees the Memorandum as a positive step by the Faculty of Education to meet the needs of the native and northern communities - needs which were also articulated to Senate members at their meeting in Hobbema.*

Recommendation 19

**It is recommended that a progress report with regard to actions resulting from these recommendations be presented to the Senate within three years.**

This report comprises the Senate's response to Recommendation 19.